ISSN 0712-7774

CEREBUS

GOING HOME

21

$2.25 $3.50 £1.50

252
MAR

ISSN 0712-7771

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21

$1.25 - $3.50 - £1.50

252
MAR

ADDENDA

Letter from EH to Mary, found among abandoned papers at the Finca Vigia, dated June 1, 1953:

Honey:

I wrote these notes to clarify something in my head. Please return them.

Your exact words this morning were "You want to hog everything. You get angry if anybody even writes anything about the same country you are in. Look at that man who wrote that book about Spain."

Q: Who?

A: That Frenchman.

Malraux explained. Q. Who else?

Answer: Look at the way you got angry about Mr. Dos Passos just because he wrote about Michigan.

Mr. Dos Passos and *Native Country* explained. Mary had not read the book.

At another time Mary: You never told me you had any offer from *Look*. You did no such thing. You did not show me any letter from Rice with any offer from *Look*.

Explanation offered that we had talked about it when the Leland Haywards were down here. And that Mary was tired of hearing me discuss it.

Mary: You didn't tell me anything about Lowe's offer. You just whispered something to me.

Explanation that offer was fully explained to her after the Lowes had left. They left almost immediately after Mary arrived. They had called up and asked when they could come out. We had talked the whole matter over and after I had made our objections. Lowe had made his offer which Mary and I talked over at length that afternoon and evening. They came out the next day and we talked it over together discussing the character of the photographer etc. Lowe sent in his written agreement which Mary read and said was exactly the terms he had proposed except for the photographer to be three weeks rather than two.

Things getting sort of hopeless. Yesterday at lunch was shouted at, scolded and tongue lashed about clothes. Shut up and left the table. Came back and the tirade continued shouted so that servants and deaf Taylor could hear. Made no answer and did not get involved in it and did not bring it up.

The night after fishing the whole first day in the tournament was awakened at one thirty a.m. by scolding and bawling out. No way to stop it. Did not answer except to ask if would please stop as had to be up early to be out the next day. Scolding and tongue lashing continued and left and sat in the chair in the living room until five a.m. when came in with Mary asleep and slept until six when had to get up to organize sandwiches, breakfast, etc.

This scolding and tongue lashing was a continuation of a very violent one given me in the car in front of Taylor and Roland. This scolding tirade was exceptionally violent. A scolding for delaying our getting home early by stopping and talking too long with people at Floridita was probably justified and deserved. The violence of this one in the car and the vituperation in front of other people, however, was exceedingly embarrassing. The picking it up to say it all over again at one thirty a.m. I do not think was justified nor sound.

Got all preparations made and was leaving the house before Mary woke. Waved cheerful good-bye never mentioned the scolding nor the bawling out. Mary very good tempered and pleasant when we came in from the Tournament last Sunday night.

continued next issue

CEREBUS
NO. 252 MARCH 2000

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GOING HOME

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BOOK ONE
Sudden Moves
(Cerebus 232 to 239)

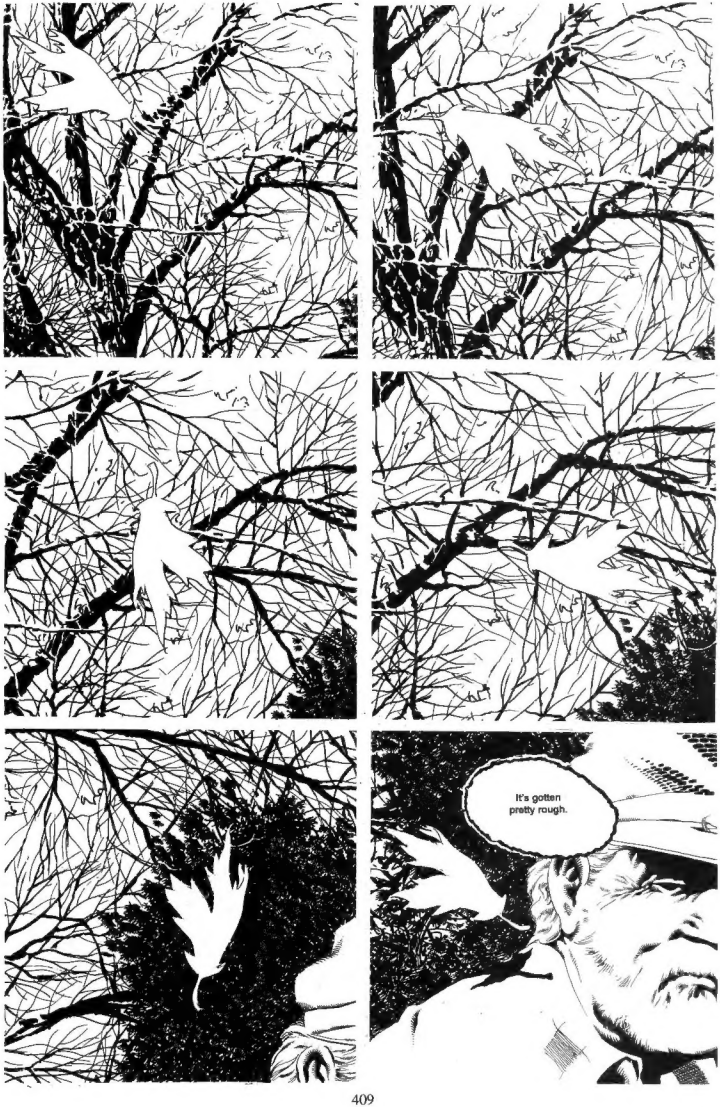
•

BOOK TWO
Fall and the River
(Cerebus 240 to 250)

•

BOOK THREE
Form & Void
(Cerebus 251 to 265)

PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY AARDVARK-VANAHEIM INC. P.O. BOX 1674, STATION C KITCHENER, ON N2G 4R2
ALL CONTENTS ©2000 DAVE SIM AND GERHARD
PRINTED IN CANADA BY PRENEY PRINT & LITHO INC. WINDSOR, ONTARIO


It's gotten
pretty rough.

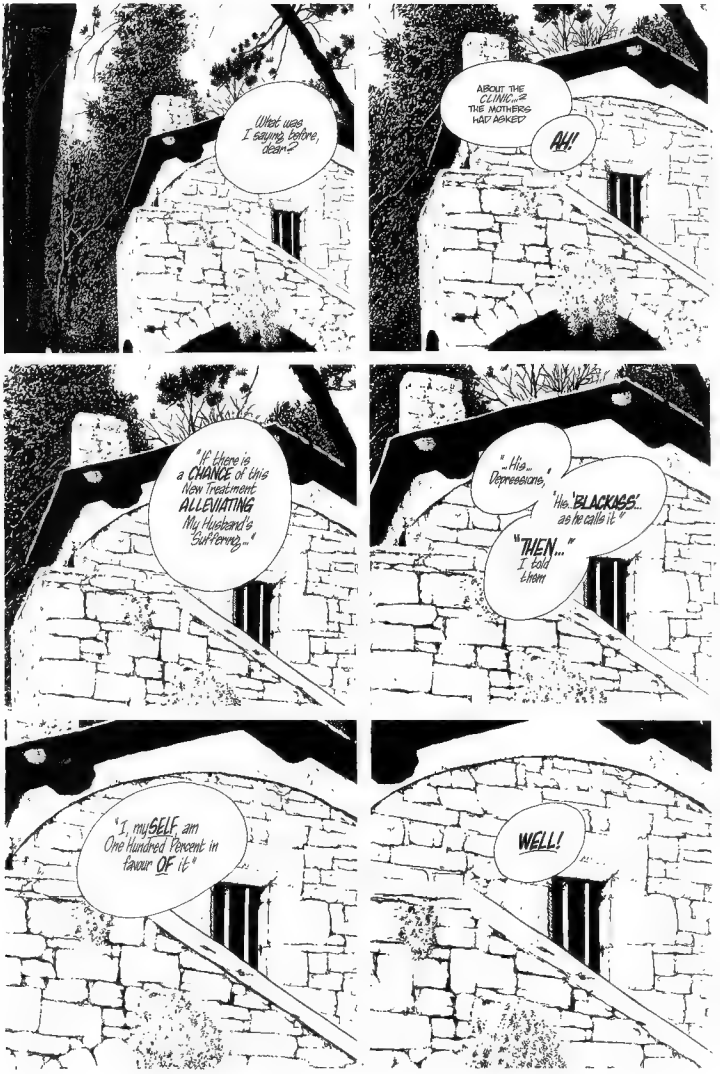
I can't finish the bloody book.
I've got it all
and I know what I want it to be
but I can't get it down.
Hotch, I can't finish the book. I *can't*.
I've been at this goddamn worktable all day, standing here all day
all I've got to get is this one thing, maybe only a sentence

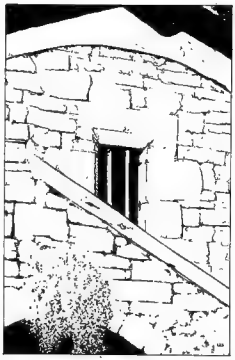
maybe more,
I don't know,
and I can't
get it. Not
any of it.
You understand?
I can't.
I've told them to scratch the
book. It was all set for the
fall but I had to scratch it.

No, no they won't. Because I can't finish it.
Not this fall or next spring or ten years from now.
I *can't.*
This wonderful damn book and I can't finish it.

You understand?

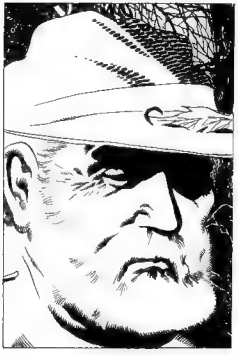
open to the outDOORS--thus enSURING that the sleeping bags will be aired out--THOROughly by morning.
Our GUN-BEARERS will be here at noon.
?


What was I saying, before, dear?
ABOUT THE CLINIC...? THE MOTHERS HAD ASKED
AH!
"If there is a CHANCE of this New Treatment ALLEVIATING My Husband's Suffering..."
"...His... Depressions,"
"His..."BLACKASS"... as he calls it."
"THEN..." I said them
"I, mySELF, am One Hundred Percent in favour OF it."
WELL!



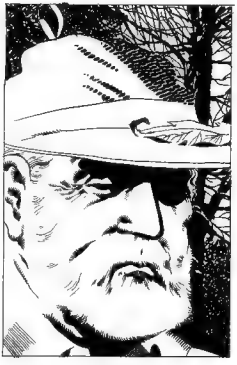
You talk about the **Close-Order Drill** Efficiency of **Today's Modern Medicine!**

No sooner were the words **OUT** of my mouth than the Clinic Staff were **WHEELING** Papa out onto the roof of the Admissions Office.

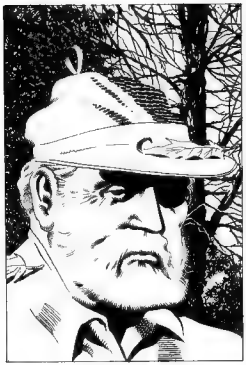


UNSPOOLING (as they went) what I reckoned to be not more than **EIGHTY** and not less than **SEVENTY** meters of woven, quarter-inch copper wire

ONE END of which they carefully **UN**wove into two strands of approximately equal length which they then alligator-clipped to Papa's left and right ears respectively

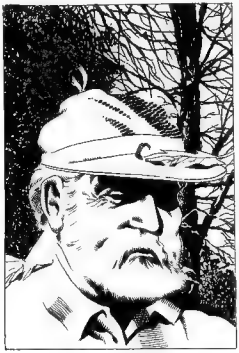


THE OTHER END of which guiltily ascended to the summit of the Clinic Flagpole



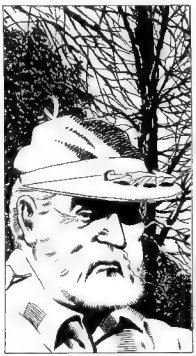
Carried aloft clenched between the dreadly teeth of a very Brave and Capable Young Woman (whose name — I regret to say — I failed to ascertain

PREOCCUPIED as I was, at the time, by Papa's Well-Being,)



Where **SAID** Other End of **SAID** copper wire was firmly affixed to the All-Metal Rooster Shaped Weather Vane surmounting **SAID** Civic Flagpole by **SAID** Brave and Capable Young Woman

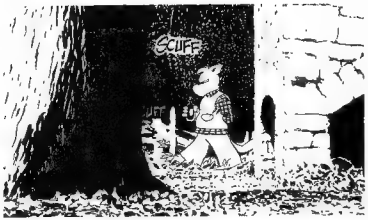
Who **THEREUPON** descended to **SAID** Admissions Office roof **EVEN AS** the Rooster's Directional Finding Arrow gave indication that a Storm System was bearing down on us from out of the north-west at a cruising speed which I estimated to be not more than Thirty-Five and not less than Thirty Nautical Miles per hour.



Mere Moments Later!
Papa's First Treatment was a FAIT ACCOMPLI.
FLOP
AND...?
IT WORKED! HE'S BETTER NOW!

As I said to the mothers after Papa's THIRD treatment: "There are Three Things in this world for which I am Sur-PASSINGLY Grateful:"
"ONE? My Husband is ALIVE!"
"TWO? We Are TOGETHER!"
"THREE? It is my Whole-Hearted Conviction that — so long as those First Two Conditions PERSIST — I can envision NO HARDSHIP which we cannot Endure and NO ADVERSITY which we cannot Overcome!"
SIGH
I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW MUCH I ENVY YOU YOUR STRENGTH
GOT to be strong! Papa needs me more than EVER now
YOU KNOW it?
CEREBUS GETS INTO SOME AWFUL MOODS SOMETIMES.
WHAT DID YOU CALL IT?
BLACK BUM?

BLACKASS.
BLACK. ASS.
AND IT NEVER SEEMS TO BE ABOUT ANYTHING? HE'S JUST
Miserable to BE around?
YES!
Uncommunicative?
Gasp! YES! EXACTLY!
SOUNDS like BLACKASS all night— Take it from a


SCUFF

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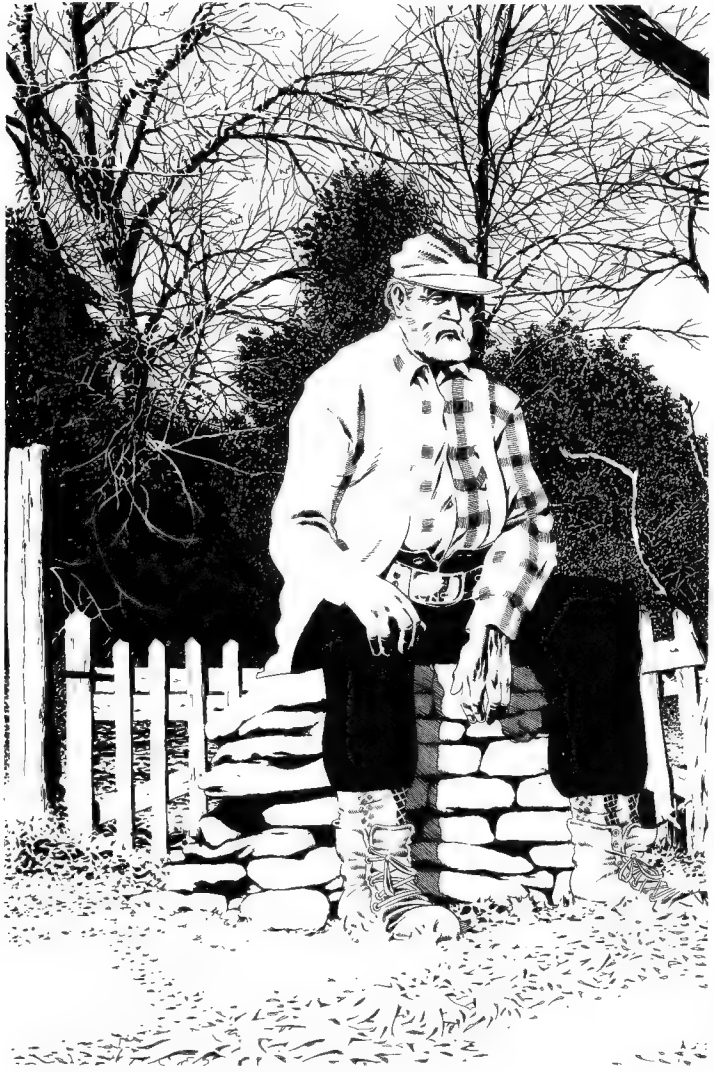
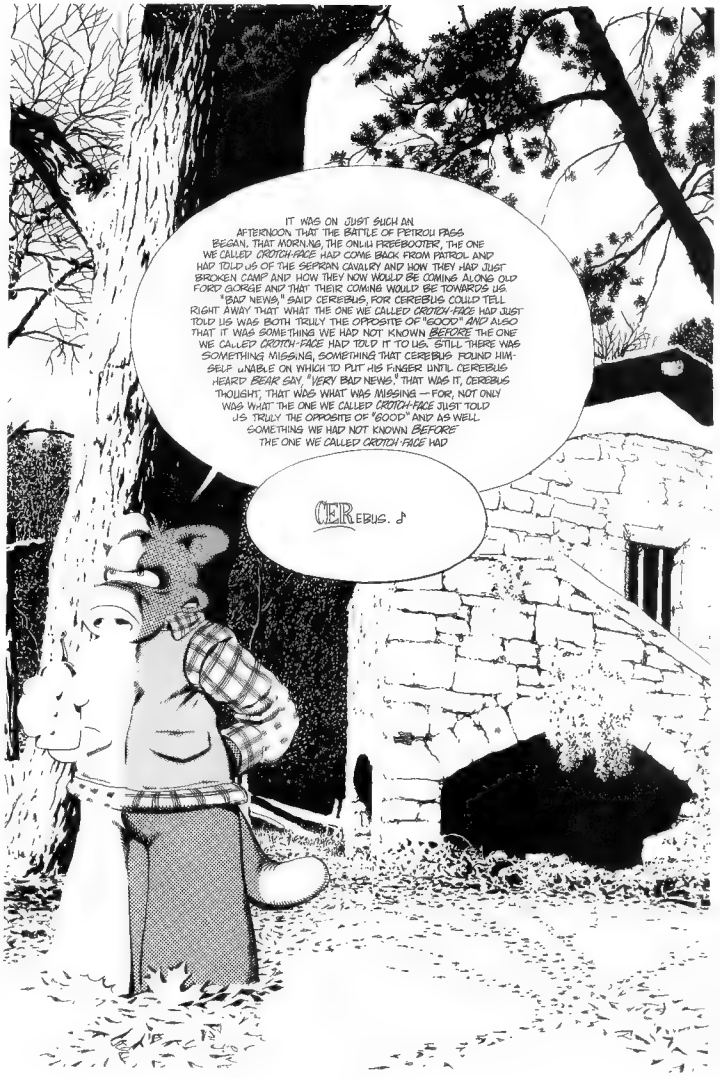
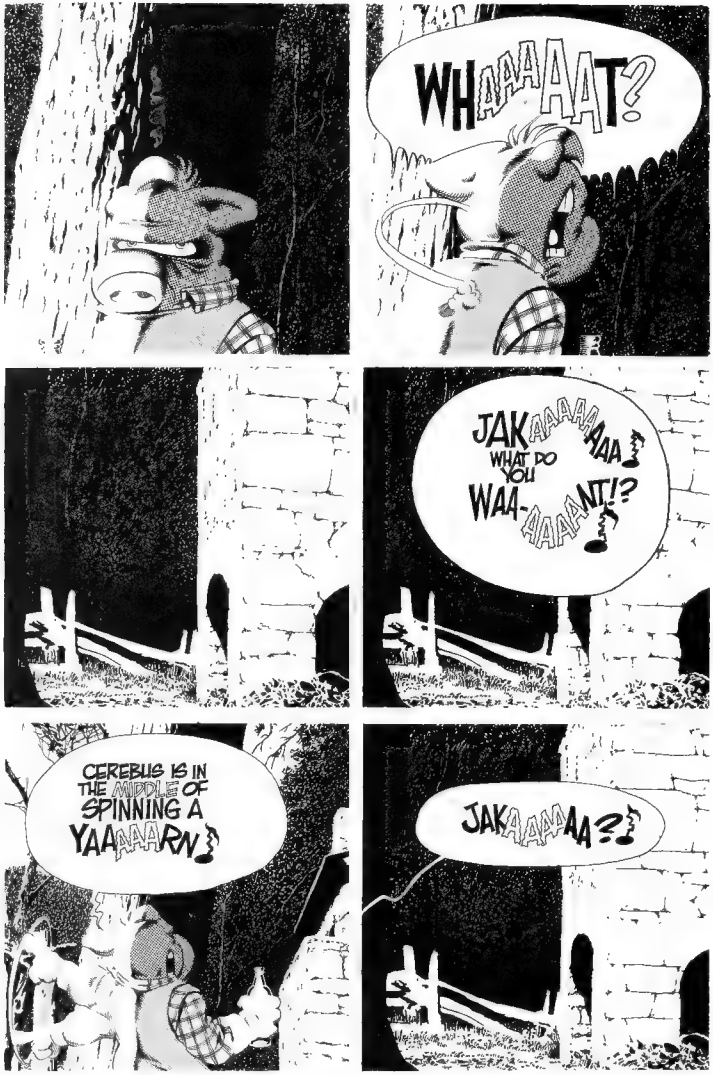
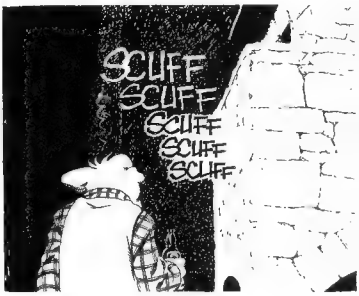



IT WAS ON JUST SUCH AN AFTERNOON THAT THE BATTLE OF PETROU PASS BEGAN, THAT MORNING, THE ONLY FREEBOOTER, THE ONE WE CALLED CROTCH-FACE HAD COME BACK FROM PATROL AND HAD TOLD US OF THE SEPRAN CAVALRY AND HOW THEY HAD JUST BROKEN CAMP AND HOW THEY NOW WOULD BE COMING ALONG OLD FORD GORGE AND THAT THERE COMING WOULD BE TOWARDS US. "BAD NEWS," SAID CEREBUS, FOR CEREBUS COULD TELL RIGHT AWAY THAT WHAT THE ONE WE CALLED CROTCH-FACE HAD JUST TOLD US WAS BOTH TRULY THE OPPOSITE OF "GOOD" AND ALSO THAT IT WAS SOMETHING WE HAD NOT KNOWN BEFORE THE ONE WE CALLED CROTCH-FACE HAD TOLD IT TO US. STILL THERE WAS SOMETHING MISSING, SOMETHING THAT CEREBUS FOUND HIMSELF UNABLE ON WHICH TO PUT HIS FINGER UNTIL CEREBUS HEARD BEAR SAY, "VERY BAD NEWS." THAT WAS IT, CEREBUS THOUGHT, THAT WAS WHAT WAS MISSING — FOR, NOT ONLY WAS WHAT THE ONE WE CALLED CROTCH-FACE JUST TOLD US TRULY THE OPPOSITE OF "GOOD" AND AS WELL SOMETHING WE HAD NOT KNOWN BEFORE THE ONE WE CALLED CROTCH-FACE HAD
CEREBUS. ♪


WHAAAAAT?
JAKAAAAAAAA
WHAT DO YOU
WAA-AAAAANT!?
CEREBUS IS IN THE MIDDLE OF SPINNING A YAAAAARN
JAKAAAAAA?

Heh.
"WOMEN," EH, HAM?
"CAN'T LIVE WITH EM."
"CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT 'EM"


SCUFF
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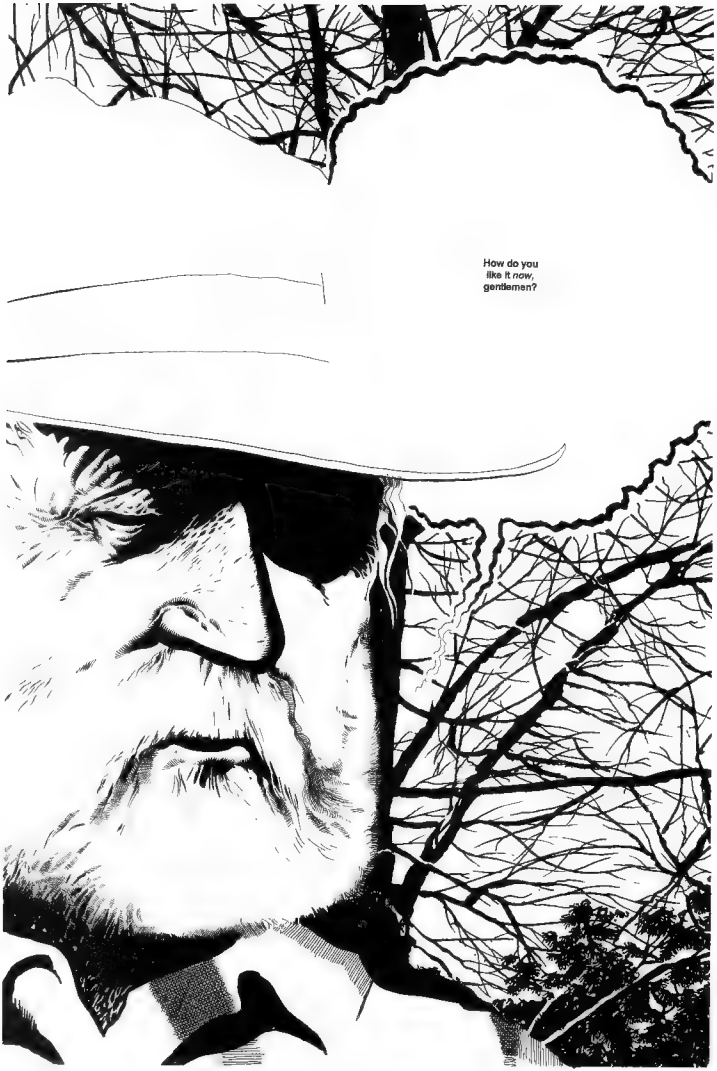
JAKAAAAA?!

SCUFF

WHAT DO YOU WAAAAAT?


How do you like it *now*, gentlemen?

TO HAM & HAM NOT

15 September '99 - "How are you doing these days?"

"Not much," he replied, mishearing the question.

"It hasn't been very long."

"No. Not long."

"But sometimes it seems like it has been."

"Has been what?"

"Long."

"Oh."

"I forget which one of us is speaking now, it has been so long since the last pronoun."

"Yes," one of us said, "it has." It didn't seem to matter which one of us it was who said it It was getting dark out.

28 December '99 - I had just about given up hope of finding anything in the Hemingway oeuvre that I liked. I had only three Hemingway works left to read, having endured all of his novels and short stories. These three were: *Green Hills of Africa*, *Death in the Afternoon*, and his 1938 play *The Fifth Column*. I had spent fifty-two dollars of my own money to buy *Death in the Afternoon* in hardcover at Chapters in Waterloo. This represented the most amount of money I had ever spent on a book that I was reasonably certain I would not like. I was impressed that it was almost four hundred pages long, close to the same length as *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and the font size of the type was even smaller than the font used on *For Whom* . such as one would find in a real book. I remained impressed until the book came to an abrupt end on page 218 and was immediately followed by one hundred pages of photographs and one hundred pages of glossary. I am an optimist by nature and had kept assuring myself that Papa was saving the best stuff for the last half of his book. *Green Hills of Africa* had a very interesting design concept for the beginning of each chapter, which I decided to incorporate into the second half of "Form & Void." I do not know if the designs were in the original printing or if they were peculiar to this edition with its stamp on the front cover that reads: "The Hemingway Century" (a sentiment which, apart from a moment of interest here or there, is hard to refute in retrospect). Unless Papa had something to do with the design of the chapter headings, I have very little to say about his work on this particular book

I began reading *The Fifth Column* on a Friday night, before going out to have several beers. I was very surprised to find that I liked it. It had been written as war propaganda, and war propaganda is very seldom interesting even at the time, let alone sixty years later. It was war propaganda for the Spanish Civil War, which was a war between communists and fascists. The war was more complicated than that but not *much* more complicated than that, which is why you do not hear very much about it apart from how complicated it was. Certainly by the time the Second World War ended, you would be very hard pressed to find anyone who was willing to brag that he had been a good communist or a good fascist in the Spanish Civil War. For the record, Papa was a good communist in the Spanish Civil War, although he would have preferred the term "anti-fascist," and pretty much everyone agreed very quickly that Papa was totally non-political and had only raised money for ambulances in the Spanish Civil War. The nice thing about ambulances is that they tend not to have political loyalties but are still very close to the heart of the action, which means that an ambulance—like a journalist—that survives a war has certain bragging rights which a taxi or a bus that was nowhere near the action doesn't tend to have.

I finished the first act of *The Fifth Column* and went out for my several beers looking forward to reading the second act and pleased that I had found something of Papa's that I could read which did not affect me like fingernails scraping on a chalkboard.

By the end of the next day, I had a complete inventory of Hemingway works which I liked:

"The Snows of Kilimanjaro," "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" and the first act of his play *The Fifth Column.*

I

All of these were written in a very short time between 1936 and 1938. The first two, which are short stories, were written in 1936, around the time that EH was on his first safari to Africa with his second wife, Pauline (not to be confused with "The Christmas Gift" or *True at First Light*, which were written about his *second* safari to Africa with his *fourth* wife, Mary, and which we will be getting to later in "Form & Void"). I think that these two short stories were reactions to three different realities in Papa's life at the time: one, his marriage to Pauline was almost over; two, word had spread that F. Scott Fitzgerald was finished as a writer; and three, Papa was travelling in much wealthier circles. At various points in the late 1930s a new voice entered Papa's work, the voice of the very rich. Which allows me to abandon temporarily the flat midwestern voice, which Papa stole from Gertrude Stein, and Sherwood Anderson's flat New England voice. I am very happy about that.

II

This new voice could, perhaps, best be described as *Aristocraticus* and *Bitcha Aristocratica* in its respective gender forms. It was the voice of those Americans possessed of scads of cash but, alas, no genuinely blue blood. It was freely adapted from the voices of actors

and actresses in plays written by Englishmen like Noel Coward (who, if they were not *of* the upper classes, they had at least had occasion to *hear* the real article from time to time—and were thus capable of producing a serviceable imitation sufficient to fool the *lower* classes and social-climbing colonials, at any rate). Pauline had *come* from that environment, heiress to some dreary floor wax or department store fortune or other, who caught Hem's amorous attentions. (*Hem* he became for a time with Pauline—a name which would not sound out of place in the pseudo-aristocratic environs of the Harvard yard or Yale's better social clubs. As in: "Good Old Hem".)

Now "Good Old Hem" had had a rather easy go of it when the time had come to dismiss his first wife, Hadley, who was of the same midwestern peasant stock as himself. Pauline had been one of Hadley's closest and dearest friends (*dah*-ling) and had, with the pseudo-aristocrat's aptitudes for such villainy, insinuated herself into the Hemingways' marriage and then just let nature take its course until she became something of an…inevitability? So. Much of Good Old Hem's dirty work was done *for* him, and it was only left to him to take up separate residence from his wife and vow to her that he would not see or in any way contact Pauline for some respectable interim period or other (which I'm sure Pauline, the pseudo-aristocrat, found *most* endearing in its own little midwestern peasant kind of way).

Well. Ten years down the road when "Good Old Hem" (soon to be simply "Ernie" or "Papa" again) felt the urge growing to give *Pauline* the old heave-ho, he was to find that *Bitcha Aristocratica* was an entirely different kettle of fish from the midwestern peasant (heave-ho-wise). Unlike Hadley—who had accepted a modest stipend and royalties from *A Farewell to Arms*—Pauline would get a substantial alimony, child support, and the house in Key West, Florida. This despite the fact that the total amounted to chump change placed alongside her share in her own family's fortune (you remember—the floor wax or the department store or whatever it was).

Anyway, the first safari to Africa took place against the backdrop of the "imminent heave-ho," and, reading between the lines, I'm sure Good Old Hem was finding out just how much the eternal verity "how sharper than a serpent's tooth…" underscored the temperament of *Bitcha Aristocratica* scorned. Nor was Pauline his sole experience with the breed. There was also Jane Mason, a socialite who would one day marry Arnold Gingrich (I mean, *dah*-ling, of *all* people…) but who was at the time married to a cartoonist (I mean, *dah*-ling, of *all* occupations!) named Grant Mason. Mr. Mason was the heir to some dreary Wall Street financier fortune or other, so the "cartoonist thing" could be overlooked by the temporary Mrs. Mason (one rather supposes). Anyway, the much-copulated-with Jane was something of a pioneer in the "wives running around loose with chums of the opposite gender with a certain amount of discreet and not-so-discreet bed-hopping involved" business, which undoubtedly rubbed Good Old Hem's midwestern peasant nature the wrong way even as he was enjoying its carnal benefits. He decided the cartoonist was a twirp, a straight line representing the shortest distance between two unethical positions (as it were). It is not completely out of the realm of possibility that Jane Mason married Arnold Gingrich to punish Hemingway for not succumbing more fully to her pseudo-aristocratic charms. "I can't believe she married that little turd," opined Papa on the occasion of his (hitherto ferociously loyal) *Esquire* editor's nuptials. Bullseye for the former Mrs Mason. The Hemingway/Jane Mason/Grant Mason triangle is one of the models for the Ham/Jaka/Cerebus "triangle." In later life Hemingway alluded pretty specifically to Jane Mason as the model for Margot Macomber, which I'm sure she was. Partly. But many of Hemingway's characters were pastiches of many people he had known. To say that Margot Macomber was modeled *solely* on Jane Mason is, I think, to drastically underrate the extent to which F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Crack-Up" series was preying on Hemingway after the first installment appeared in February of 1936. Not to be too psychologically glib about it, but I think Good Old Hem's ego—in the midst of taking an awful *Bitcha Aristocratica* beating from Pauline—found small refuge in projecting itself onto F. Scott Fitzgerald and in Hem's growing conviction *cum* obsession that Poor Old Scott's Problem was that he lacked Good Old Hem's aptitude for picking the Right Significant Other. Yes, even as his marriage to Pauline was collapsing, Hemingway took great pride at his ability to "pick 'em."

III

That Bitch Zelda just ran roughshod over the poor guy. That was the problem. Scott had more talent than any five living writers you could name. *Scott's* problem was that he just couldn't see that *Zelda* was his problem. Maybe old Ernie could write a story that would help his pal Scott to see the light. Maybe Ernie and "Good Old Hem" would write it together. And maybe they would call it: "The Short Happy Life of *Francis* (as in Francis Scott Fitzgerald) Macomber."

IV

It's a very good story. It's a very good story on many different levels. It is about a husband and wife on safari in Africa, Francis and Margot Macomber. At the beginning of the story, we find out that Francis has proven to be a coward on the hunt, turning tail and running from danger. The story is narrated by the white hunter who is in charge of the expedition.

V

The white hunter is English, you see. So he has that authentic aristocratic voice of which Francis' and Margot's are just a pale imitation. He's very much a

man's man in that way which was vanishing quickly by 1936. Not all puffed up and swaggering, but a good lad. You know? Someone who knows what's what. When to speak up and when to keep your own counsel. Some of the best things in the story are the contrasts between Wilson's internal assessments and the reactions of the Americans before him. Francis and Wilson get onto the topic of Francis' cowardice:

"...I'm awfully sorry about that lion business. It doesn't have to go any further does it? I mean no one will hear about it, will they?"

"You mean will I tell it at the Mathaiga Club?" Wilson looked at him now coldly. He had not expected this. So he's a bloody four-letter man as well as a bloody coward, he thought. I rather liked him too until today. But how is one to know about an American?

"No," said Wilson. "I'm a professional hunter. We never talk about our clients. You can be quite easy on that. It's supposed to be bad form to ask us not to talk though."

He had decided now that to break would be much easier. He would eat then, by himself and could read a book with his meals. They would eat by themselves. He would see them through the safari on a very formal basis—what was it the French called it? Distinguished consideration—and it would be a damn sight easier than having to go through this emotional trash. He'd insult him and make a good clean break. Then he could read a book with his meals and he'd still be drinking their whisky. That was the phrase for it when a safari went bad. You ran into another white hunter and you asked, "How is everything going?" and he answered, "Oh, I'm still drinking their whisky," and you knew everything had gone to pot.

"I'm sorry," Macomber said and looked at him with his American face that would stay adolescent until it became middle-aged, and Wilson noted his crew-cropped hair, fine eyes only faintly shifty, good nose, thin lips and handsome jaw. "I'm sorry I didn't realize that. There are lots of things I don't know."

So what could he do, Wilson thought. He was all ready to break it off quickly and neatly and here the beggar was apologizing after he had just insulted him. He made one more attempt. "Don't worry about me talking," he said. "I have a living to make. You know in Africa no woman ever misses her lion and no white man ever bolts."

"I bolted like a rabbit," Macomber said.

Now what in hell were you going to do about a man who talked like that, Wilson wondered.

Wilson looked at Macomber with his flat, blue, machine-gunner's eyes and the other smiled back at him. He had a pleasant smile if you did not notice how his eyes showed when he was hurt.

"Maybe I can fix it up on buffalo," he said. "We're after them next, aren't we?"

"In the morning if you like," Wilson told him. Perhaps he had been wrong. This was certainly the way to take it. You most certainly could not tell a damned thing about an American. He was all for Macomber again. If you could forget the morning. But, of course, you couldn't. The morning had been about as bad as they come.

And now here comes Margot and Hemingway manages to distill everything he has to say about Scott and Zelda, Pauline, Jane Mason, *Bitcha Aristocrata,* and Americans in general with a lucidity which would never again be evidenced in his work:

"Are you feeling better, Francis, my pearl?"

"Oh, much," said Macomber.

"I've dropped the whole thing," she said, sitting down at the table. "What importance is there to whether Francis is any good at killing lions? That's not his trade. That's Mr. Wilson's trade. Mr. Wilson is really very impressive killing anything. You do kill anything, don't you?"

"Oh, anything," said Wilson. "Simply anything." They are, he thought, the hardest in the world; the hardest, the cruelest, the most predatory and the most attractive and their men have softened or gone to pieces nervously as they have hardened. Or is it that they pick men they can handle? They can't know that much at the age they marry, he thought. He was grateful that he had gone through his education on American women before now because this was a very attractive one.

"We're going after buff in the morning," he told her.

"I'm coming," she said.

"No, you're not."

"Oh, yes, I am. Mayn't I, Francis?"

"Why not stay in camp?"

"Not for anything," she said. "I wouldn't miss something like today for anything."

When she left, Wilson was thinking, when she went off to cry, she seemed a hell of a fine woman. She seemed to understand, to realize, to be hurt for him and for herself and to know how things really stood. She is away for twenty minutes and now she is back, simply enamelled in that American female cruelty. They are the damnedest women. Really the damnedest.

"We'll put on another show for you tomorrow," Francis Macomber said.

"You're not coming," Wilson said.

"You're very mistaken," she told him. "And I want so to see you perform again. You were lovely this morning. That is if blowing things' heads off is lovely."

"Here's the lunch," said Wilson. "You're very

merry, aren't you?"

"Why not? I didn't come out here to be dull."

"Well, it hasn't been dull," Wilson said. He could see the boulders in the river and the high bank beyond with the trees and he remembered the morning.

"Oh, no," she said. "It's been charming. And tomorrow. You don't know how I look forward to tomorrow."

"That's eland he's offering you," Wilson said.

"They're the big cowy things that jump like hares, aren't they?"

"I suppose that describes them," Wilson said.

"It's very good meat," Macomber said.

"Did you shoot it, Francis?" she asked.

"Yes."

"They're not dangerous, are they?"

"Only if they fall on you," Wilson told her.

"I'm so glad."

"Why not let up on the bitchery just a little, Margot," Macomber said, cutting the eland steak and putting some mashed potato, gravy and carrot on the down-turned fork that tined through the piece of meat.

"I suppose I could," she said, "since you put it so prettily."

"Tonight we'll have champagne for the lion," Wilson said. "It's a bit too hot at noon."

"Oh, the lion," Margot said. "I'd forgotten the lion!"

So, Robert Wilson thought to himself, she is giving him a ride, isn't she? Or do you suppose that's her idea of putting up a good show? How should a woman act when she discovers her husband is a bloody coward? She's damn cruel but they're all cruel. They govern, of course, and to govern one has to be cruel sometimes. Still, I've seen enough of their damn terrorism.

"Have some more eland," he said to her politely.

Hemingway is saying something valuable here. Something valuable about life and about men and about women. He is saying something valuable about what happens when masculinity erodes and women begin crossing established thresholds. I believe it is only because Hemingway thought he was addressing Scott regarding Zelda—that Hemingway thought him*self* to be an Americanized Robert Wilson—that he was able to address what was going on between himself and Pauline and so cut close to the bone of what was going on between American man and American woman. Francis redeems himself on the hunt the next day, exhibiting courage where he had exhibited cowardice, shaking free of Margot's dominion over him, and arriving at a real understanding of what it is to be a man in the sense that Wilson understands the term. The transformation is remarkable and leads to a remarkable piece of writing:

The great American boy-men. Damned strange people. But he liked this Macomber now. Damned strange fellow...

...Beggar had probably been afraid all his life. Don't know what started it. But over now...

Be a damn fire eater now. He'd seen it in the war work the same way. More of a change than any loss of virginity. Fear gone like an operation. Something else grew in its place. Main thing a man had. Made him into a man. Women knew it too. No bloody fear.

From the far corner of the seat Margaret Macomber looked at the two of them. There was no change in Wilson. She saw Wilson as she had seen him the day before when she had first realized what his great talent was. But she saw the change in Francis Macomber now.

"Do you have that feeling of happiness about what's going to happen?" Macomber asked, still exploring his new wealth.

"You're not supposed to mention it," Wilson said, looking in the other's face. "Much more fashionable to say you're scared. Mind you, you'll be scared too, plenty of times."

"But you have a feeling of happiness about action to come?"

"Yes," said Wilson. "There's that. Doesn't do to talk too much about all this. Talk the whole thing away. No pleasure in anything if you mouth it up too much."

"You're both talking rot," said Margot. "Just because you've chased some helpless animals in a motor car you talk like heroes."

"Sorry," said Wilson. "I have been gassing too much." She's worried about it already, he thought.

"If you don't know what we're talking about why not keep out of it?" Macomber asked his wife.

"You've gotten awfully brave, awfully suddenly," his wife said contemptuously, but her contempt was not secure. She was very afraid of something.

Macomber laughed, a very natural hearty laugh. "You know I have," he said. "I really have."

"Isn't it sort of late?" Margot said bitterly. Because she had done the best she could for many years back and the way they were together now was no one person's fault.

"Not for me," said Macomber.

Margot said nothing but sat back in the corner of the seat.

There is a great validity to what Hemingway is saying here, relative to Scott Fitzgerald. Of course by 1936—the time period when Fitzgerald was writing his "The Crack-Up" articles in the same magazine where "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" would appear, Arnold Gingrich's *Esquire*—it was far too late for Fitzgerald to discover genuine bravery or experience any burst of decisiveness strong enough to compel him to reassess Zelda's role in his life. Even Hemingway lacked that sort of bravery. Pauline would not get the heave-ho until her replacement—Martha Gellhorn—

arrived on the scene and had been approved for her role as wife #3. Later in the year, Good Old Hem would try giving Scott Fitzgerald a different wake-up call—this time in a story called "The Snows of Kilimanjaro." Hemingway made much of the fact that he had loaded the story with a prodigious number of story ideas (the title character is a writer dying of gangrene poisoning, and much of his interior monologue concerns the stories he would never get to write). Personally, I don't see many ideas—as I would describe them—on the list at all. Neil Gaiman did the same thing in his "Calliope" story in *Sandman: Dream Country*—and came up with actual story *ideas*—without making such a fuss about it.

One paragraph read:

The rich were dull and they drank too much or they played too much backgammon. They were dull and they were repetitious. He remembered poor Scott Fitzgerald and his romantic awe of them and how he had started a story once that began, "The very rich are different from you and me." And how someone had said to Scott, Yes they have more money. But that was not humorous to Scott. He thought they were a special glamorous race and when he found they weren't it wrecked him just as much as any other thing that wrecked him.

The lucidity that old Hem had exhibited in "The Short Happy Life…" excerpt above had fled, and Hemingway was left accusing Scott Fitzgerald of an inclination which—by 1936—was more Hemingway's problem than Fitzgerald's. Fitzgerald responded, almost immediately after the story's appearance, on July 16 (I can't resist adding: in 1936, 63 years, to the day, before John F. Kennedy Jr.'s plane went into the drink off Martha's Vineyard):

Dear Ernest:

Please lay off me in print. If I choose to write de profundis sometimes it doesn't mean I want friends praying aloud over my corpse. No doubt you meant it kindly but it cost me a night's sleep. And when you incorporate it (the story) in a book would you mind cutting my name?

It's a fine story—one of your best—even though the "Poor Scott Fitzgerald ect" [sic] *rather spoiled it for me.*

Ever Your Friend
Scott
Riches have never facinated [sic] *me, unless combined with the greatest charm or distinction.*

With a certain level of his *own* cowardice, Max Perkins weighed in on the debate (Perkins was Hemingway and Fitzgerald's editor at Scribners) in a letter addressed—alas—not to Papa or Scott, but to Perkins' cousin, Elizabeth Lemmon, wherein he described Hemingway's reference to Scott in "Snows…" as "contemptible" and explained the true circumstances of the incident described in the paragraph: During lunch with Perkins and critic Mary Colum, *Hemingway* had said, "I am getting to know the rich," to which *Mrs. Colum* had responded, "The only difference between the rich and other people is that the rich have more money" (A. Scott Berg, *Max Perkins: Editor of Genius*, p. 305).

VI

Anyway, meanwhile back at "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," the story approaches its climax. So, if you want to read it, do go and read it now because I'm about to give away the ending.

One of the buffalo that Francis has shot is wounded and has escaped into the undergrowth, and Francis and Wilson prepare to go in after him, uncertain if the animal has one good charge left in him or is pushing up daisies. Oh, hell. Here's the rest of it. I've already printed enough for Jack, Patrick, and Gregory (Hemingway's sons and literary executors) to sue me back into commercial art:

"You might as well shoot the Springfield," Wilson said. "You're used to it. We'll leave the Mannlicher in the car with the Memsahib. Your gun-bearer can carry your heavy gun. I've this damned cannon. Now let me tell you about them." He had saved this until the last because he did not want to worry Macomber. "When a buff comes he comes with his head high and thrust straight out. The boss of the horns covers any sort of a brain shot. The only shot is straight into the nose. The only other shot is into his chest or, if you're to one side, into the neck or the shoulders. After they've been hit once they take a hell of a lot of killing. Don't try anything fancy. Take the easiest shot there is. They've finished skinning out that head now. Should we get started?"

He called to the gun-bearers, who came wiping their hands, and the older one got into the back.

"I'll only take Kongoni," Wilson said. "The other can watch to keep the birds away."

As the car moved slowly across the open space toward the island of brushy trees that ran in a tongue of foliage along a dry water course that cut the open swale, Macomber felt his heart pounding and his mouth was dry again, but it was excitement, not fear.

"Here's where he went in," Wilson said. Then to the gun-bearer in Swahili, "Take the blood spoor."

The car was parallel to the patch of bush. Macomber, Wilson and the gun-bearer got down. Macomber, looking back, saw his wife, with the rifle by her side, looking at him. He waved to her and she did not wave back.

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